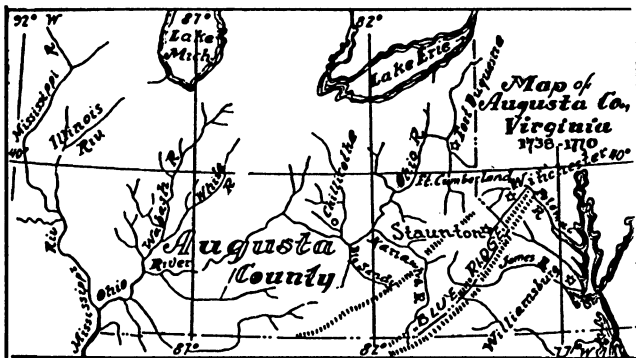


# AUGUSTA HISTORICAL BULLETIN



JED HOTCHKISS

AUGUSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 26

SPRING 1990

NUMBER 1

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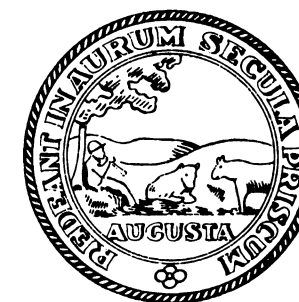
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# AUGUSTA HISTORICAL BULLETIN

Published by the  
AUGUSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Founded 1964  
Post Office Box 686  
Staunton, Virginia 24401



VOLUME 26

SPRING 1990

NUMBER 1

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550 Copies printed by  
Mid Valley Press, Inc.  
Verona, Virginia

### NOTICE

Dues are assessed for each calendar year. Notices of dues are sent in November prior to the year in which due. This is done to allow you to pay and take the income tax deduction in the year you prefer. Members who have not paid by February first are re-billed. Members who have not paid by May first are dropped from membership.

It is urgent that the society be promptly notified of changes of address. Bulletins which cannot be delivered by the postal service will not be forwarded due to high postage rates.

*Augusta County History, 1865-1950*, by Richard K. MacMaster, \$33.85 postpaid

Copies of the *Augusta County Historical Atlas* are still available—\$20.22.

*Shirey's Guide Book to Augusta County, Staunton, and Waynesboro, Virginia* by Paul C. Shirey, \$1.75

Howard M. Wilson, *Great Valley Patriots*, \$15 plus \$1.50 postage and handling, plus sales tax where applicable

Copies of the Augusta Declaration of 1775 are available @ \$3.00 plus \$1.00 postage.

Copies of this issue to all members

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A purpose of the Augusta County Historical Society is to publish *Augusta Historical Bulletin* to be sent without charge to all members. Single issues are available at \$4.00 per copy.

The membership of the society is composed of annual and life members who pay the following dues:

|                           |          |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Annual (individual)       | \$7.00   |
| Annual (family)           | \$10.00  |
| Annual (sustaining)       | \$25.00  |
| Life Membership           | \$125.00 |
| Annual (Institutional)    | \$10.00  |
| Contributing — Any amount |          |



**MAIN HALL - *A Historic Landmark***

## **TODAY & YESTERDAY OVER 150 YEARS OF SERVICE\***

By

Whitfield Menefee & Ray Houser

One of the oldest schools in Virginia and the second of its kind in the world, the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind, located in Staunton, Virginia, was established by an act of the Virginia General Assembly on March 31, 1838. This was despite the fact that at that time it was considered impractical to educate both the deaf and the blind on a single campus. The Perkins School for the Blind was already an ongoing institution in Massachusetts, and the American School for the Deaf, along with 14 other similar

\*This article is based on the delightful slide program presented to the society at VSDB on 8 November 1989 during the sesqui-centennial celebration of the founding of the Virginia School for the Deaf & Blind, by Whitfield Menefee, Educational Director, and Ray Houser, a very active alumnus of the school.

Picture credits: Virginia School for Deaf & Blind.



Time Capsule Ceremony

schools in the eastern states had already been providing special education for nearly 20 years when the Staunton school opened. Actually, Virginia Governor James Pleasants in 1825 recommended that the legislature establish a school for the deaf, and in 1826 a bill was introduced to that effect. The bill was postponed because the legislature wanted proof that there were sufficient numbers of deaf children to justify such a school. In 1828, having been assured that there were over 400 deaf in the state, Governor William B. Giles pursued the project. At about the same time, a group was endeavoring to establish in Virginia a school for the blind. The group, while understanding that educational methods for the deaf and the blind were very different, for political reasons, joined forces. Several exhibitions before members of the legislature by blind students from the Perkins School for the Blind convinced the legislators, and on March 31, 1838, they passed an act to establish the school. Thirteen cities (including Richmond, Harrisonburg, Winchester, Charlottesville, Lexington and Covington in addition to Staunton), competed for the school. Richmond won the first round over Staunton, 37-33, but on the third and final vote Staunton prevailed 65-49. Staunton won due to its central location in the Dominion. Finally, on November 15, 1839, the school formally began instruction with two blind students and two deaf students; each disability was housed in a different location in Staunton. The first deaf students to register were Elizabeth Baker of Pendleton County (now West Virginia) and Robert Mallory Folley of Prince William County. Minerva Wooddy and Jane E. A. Womack were the first blind students.

A member of the legislature, the Honorable James Bell of Augusta County deeded five acres of land (then) just outside Staunton for the erection of the actual school campus. The Board of Visitors then purchased an additional 17 acres providing sufficient land for the school's existence. Robert Cary Long, a distinguished Baltimore architect, drew up plans for the stately Main Building of brick and stone. On July 9, 1840, the cornerstone (which, incidentally, to this day has never been located) was laid on the "northeast" of the main building.

The first principal of the Deaf Department was Joseph Dennis Tyler who had been trained in the education of the deaf at the American School in Hartford, Connecticut. The first principal of the Blind Department was Jean Charles Marrillat. Marrillat's home (still a very efficient dwelling) may still be seen on Beverley Street across from the school entrance. Major George Eskridge was the first business manager of the school, and his wife, Margaret, served as matron.

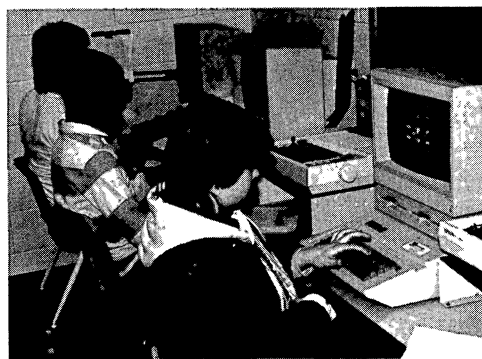
During the Civil War, the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind served as a hospital for wounded Confederate soldiers. One wounded soldier used his diamond ring to write on a window pane "My God, the Yankees are coming." Someone took the pane to preserve it, and it was subsequently lost. The students moved to the Virginia Female Institute (Stuart Hall in Staunton) where two teachers of the deaf and two of the blind taught. Marrillat remained as guardian of school property against raiding soldiers. (Later Marrillat was instrumental in establishing the West Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind in Romney, West Virginia.)



Grand Camp of Confederate Veterans of Virginia at Staunton, Oct. 10th, 11th, & 12th, 1900. Taken on the frontsteps of the Deaf and Blind School building Staunton, October 12th, 1900.

Many noted people have honored the school by visiting or by speaking at the graduation exercises. Addressing the graduates in 1855 was Joseph R. Wilson, pastor of the Staunton Presbyterian Church and father of President Woodrow Wilson (who was born in Staunton.)

The school has graduated over 6,000 deaf and blind citizens since the first graduation in 1844. The contributions to Virginia and to the United States of America are enormous. With an education and a trade, the deaf and the blind were able to earn their own living. They married, built their homes and raised their children like ordinary citizens. Many graduates (both deaf and blind) went on to higher education. The graduating class of 1988 followed the tradition by sending 50% on to higher education.



**COMPUTER** — The latest technology is provided for all students. Voice computers talk to the students.



**AUDIOLOGY** — Hearing evaluations are done on all our students.

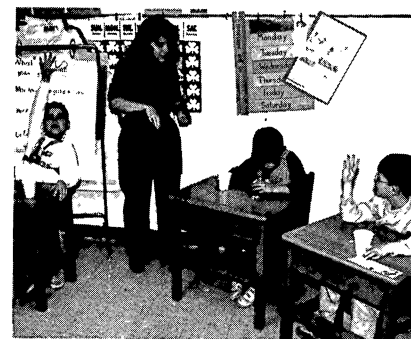
Sports for the deaf at the school have included baseball, 1883-1965, football since 1900 (the school has produced three undefeated teams), basketball since 1921, track since 1966, and wrestling since 1945 as a joint activity with both deaf and blind wrestlers. There was no other wrestling team in the whole state prior to the first team at the school, and the team had to go outside the state for matches. Girls' sports have included basketball, track, softball, volleyball and field hockey.

For years, the school raised its own vegetables and meat on a good sized farm. Argiculture was one of the trades taught, in addition to woodworking, shoe repair, printing, sewing, and the domestic arts. When the vocational shops were first established in 1841, they were not supported by state funding. The workmanship of the students had to be of such quality

that profits from the sale of their handiwork paid the salary of the instructor. Many graduates established their own cabinetmaking, shoemaking, printing, or other businesses. Recently the school received a letter from a Rockingham resident who told of his deaf forebear who was the last person to fit shoes for General Robert E. Lee. The Christians of Shenandoah County were famous for their woodworking artistry, and many items made by them are in demand in Valley antique shops.

As the school celebrates 150 years of continued excellence in educating deaf and blind children, it continues to keep abreast of the times. The school has the latest in audio-visual equipment so vital in the education of the deaf and the blind. Every television set is equipped with a closed-caption adapter. Every telephone has beside it a Tele-communication Device for the Deaf (TDD) which opens up telephone use for the deaf. Both the blind and deaf departments have up-to-date computers and programs for each disability. The computer can speak to the blind and write for the deaf. In addition, the school has a computerized program to help the deaf learn how to speak.

Just as in 1839, the arms of the school are open wide for deaf and for blind children in Virginia.



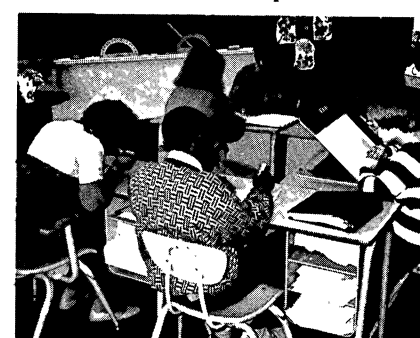
**DEAF ELEMENTARY** — Small classes provide for individual instruction.



**SPEECH** — Students receive individual and group speech. A video voice computer even lets students see their own speech.



**DEAF HIGH SCHOOL** — Classes are offered in all subject areas and lead to a high school diploma.



**BLIND HIGH SCHOOL** — Students are instructed in Braille and abacus.



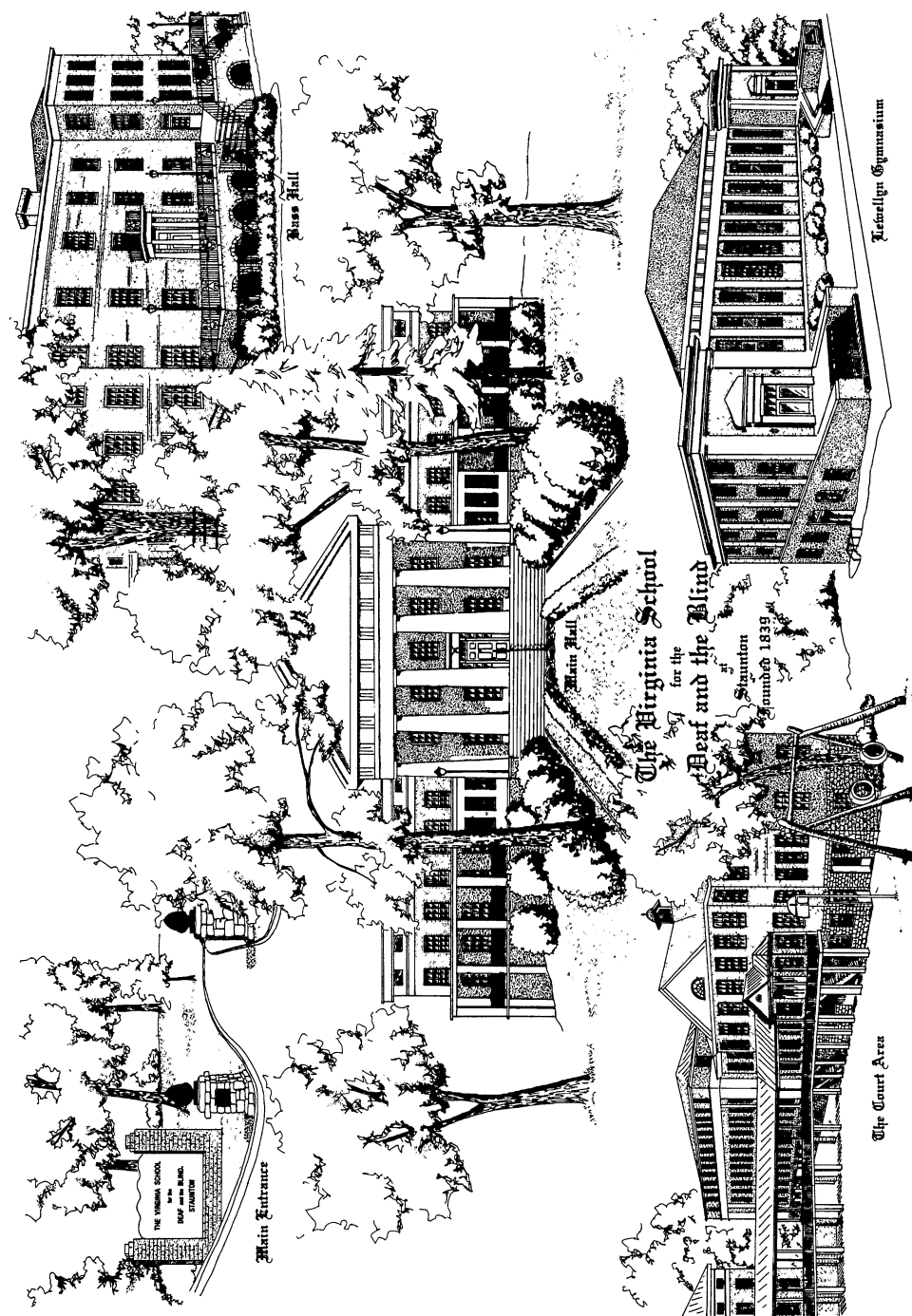
**BLIND ELEMENTARY** — Students learn basic skills in classes with trained teachers.



**DORMITORY** — Houseparents are always ready to help with everyday problems.



Even though the making of the scarecrows was a messy adventure we all learned very much and had fun doing it.



# AUGUSTA BAR PROFILES



























By  
Fitzhugh Elder

Staunton was early in the nineteenth century the most important point west of the Blue Ridge Mountains being the seat of the Superior Courts of Law and Chancery, whose jurisdiction extended over the whole western part of Virginia. Many able and learned lawyers made it their home. And so, in the hope of adding something, however slight, to the annals and tradition of the Augusta Bar, I have sought to recognize a few of those lawyers who in our early history laid the foundation for our profession in Augusta County. Among the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century lawyers Gabriel Jones and Archibald Stuart were probably the most conspicuous, both having served in the great Virginia Convention of 1788, which ratified the Federal Constitution. Gabriel Jones was a native of eastern Virginia, and was educated in London and admitted to the bar. He was a member of the H<sub>1</sub> use of Burgesses for several terms and moved to the valley where he was recommended "as a fit person to transact his majesty's affairs in this County". In 1748 he was appointed the first prosecuting attorney for Augusta County and was generally known as "the King's Attorney". He lived near Port Republic where he owned nearly twelve hundred acres of land and traveled from his home to the county seat by what was known as "Lawyers Road". He was a learned, able and successful lawyer and was treated with the greatest respect. Tradition tells that he had an extremely irritable temper and, when aroused had no hesitation in expressing what he had to say in strong terms, "mingled with a little profanity". Archibald Stuart (1757-1832) was born in Augusta County, lived in Rockbridge and Botetourt Counties and studied law with Mr. Jefferson, who was a life long friend and revered associate. In 1783 he moved to Staunton where he acquired a large practice and from 1800 until his death in 1832, was a judge of the General Court of Virginia. His residence "Stuart House" on Church Street is now occupied by a fifth generation descendant, Justice George M. Cochran and family. Judge Stuart's equally distinguished son, Alexander Hugh Holmes Stuart (1807-1891), was a legislator in the councils of Virginia and the Nation and as a Cabinet Officer, (Secretary of Interior) in the Executive Department of the Federal Government under President Filmore. Another early lawyer, John Coalter (1769-1838), for whom Coalter Street is named, resided at "Elm Grove" half a mile east of town, his circumstances were so poor he had to cut wood for the family and walk to and from his office. In later years as a distinguished Judge of the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia he referred to this period as the happiest of his life.

John H. Peyton born in Stafford County and educated at Princeton, moved to Staunton and commenced the practice of law in 1808 and contin-

## LET'S COMMUNICATE

### BRAILLE ALPHABET AND NUMBERS USED BY THE BLIND

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The Braille System is comprised of signs formed by the use of all the possible combinations of 6 dots numbered and arranged thus:

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| 2 | 5 |
| 3 | 6 |











Letters are capitalized by prefixing dot 6. The first ten letters preceded by the number sign represent numbers. Punctuation marks are formed in the lower part of the cell.

In addition to ordinary print the Braille System provides for the writing of foreign languages, musical scores, mathematical and chemical notations, and other technical matter.

*To err is human.*



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ued until his death in 1847. He served his community as a Military Officer of the War of 1812 and was a member of the Senate of Virginia. He lived at "Montgomery Hall" which is now a public park.

Daniel Sheffey was a native of Frederick, Maryland, and originally a shoemaker. He spoke with a decided German accent, studied law and soon distinguished himself at the bar, in the legislature and in Congress. What is now our public library, "Kalorama" was his home. He died in 1830.

Chapman Johnson a native of Louisa County was educated at William and Mary. He was considered a handsome man and rode horseback to and from his home, "Bearwallow". Recognized as a man of mark he died in 1849.

General Briscoe Gerald Baldwin, so called until he was elected Judge of the Supreme Court of Appeals, was born in Frederick County and educated at William and Mary. He lived at "Spring Farm" and walked to and from town carrying his papers in a green bag. In 1831 he started the first law school in Staunton, tuition set at seventy-five dollars for the session. In 1839 Baldwin gave up his school and placed the duty of legal education in the Valley to a fellow Staunton legalist, Judge Lucas P. Thompson. Judge Thompson described his school's location in Staunton, "as a place highly eligible for a legal novice on the score of society, the sound morals, and steady habits of its citizens, the salubrity of its climate, and last, though not least, the cheapness of its living." The school operated for approximately a decade. In 1866 Judge Thompson was nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the legislature as one of the Judges of the Supreme Court of Appeals, but died without taking his seat. The only other Stauntonians named to the Court of Appeals (now known as the Supreme Court of Virginia) are: George M. Harrison, Henry Winston Holt, who subsequently became Chief Justice, and George M. Cochran. The Court held its September session in Staunton until recent years (1970) having relocated here from Lewisburg, Greenbrier County, after the separation of West Virginia from Virginia.

Many of the lawyers who served the cause of the Confederacy during the War Between the States became the luminaries of the bar after the War: Gen. John Echols, Major Henderson M. Bell, Major Richard H. Catlett (Echols, Bell & Catlett); Col. John B. Baldwin, Capt. George M. Cochran (Baldwin & Cochran); Capt. James Bumgardner (Sheffy & Bumgardner); Major Thomas C. Elder, William J. Nelson (Elder & Nelson); Capt. Thomas D. Ranson; Capt. John N. Opie; Judge J.W.G. Smith; Judge J. M. Quarles and others. One member of the local bar described his war experience in these words: "In war, I ran when it was necessary, fought when there was a fighting chance, burned fence rails when cold, stole when hungry, drank when thirsty, swore when angry, and was often times insubordinate". Most of these lawyers studied law under John B. Minor, long time professor (1845-1895) at the University of Virginia. Three Speakers of the Virginia House of Delegates came from Augusta, Hugh W. Sheffey (1815-

1899), John B. Baldwin (1800-1873) and Marshall Hanger (1833-1912) and one Lieutenant-Governor of Virginia, Edward Echols (1849-1914) in 1908.

Staunton has furnished four presidents of the Virginia Bar Association since its inception in 1888. Thomas C. Elder in 1902, Allen Caperton Braxton in 1907, Armistead C. Gordon in 1921 and George M. Cochran in 1966; and one president of the Virginia State Bar, Philip L. Lotz in 1971.

In 1941 when I came to the bar the population of the town was between twelve and thirteen thousand and the area around the Court House, frequented by the lawyers, was known as "Hell's Half-Acre." All lawyers were in general practice, unlike today when lawyers offer special services, and few of them made very much money. I held the elected post of Commonwealth's Attorney for eighteen years with a starting pay of one hundred fifty dollars per month and no allowance for office space or a secretary. I prosecuted all crimes in the city, but nevertheless worked only part time and practiced law as well. There weren't as many people or as many crimes and not as much work to do. Lawyer's offices were austere; all that was needed was a typewriter, a desk and a few law books. One office, some will remember, was heated by a potbellied stove, fired by wood brought in from the door yard by an aged secretary. My own office had a rug on the floor and one of our Judges on his first visit commented, "Your country clients will not like this rug."

Judge Joseph A. Glasgow presided over the Augusta Circuit Court having succeeded Judge Holt at the time of his election to the Special Court of Appeals in 1928. Judge Glasgow was a large man and several of the young lawyers broke in his new shoes in order that they would be more comfortable. He heard the evidence in most cases while standing in the doorway of the anteroom in order that he could smoke. Judge Floridus Crosby presided over the Corporation Court having succeeded Judge Richard S. Ker. Judge Harry May succeeded Judge Crosby on the Corporation Bench when Judge Crosby moved to the Augusta Circuit Court. J. Martin Perry was the Nestor of the bar and had a substantial Corporate practice. John D. White was County Commonwealth's Attorney and he and Wayt B. Timberlake, Jr. had a large tort practice. Both of the Taylor's, J. Wesley and Forest were active trial lawyers along with Charles Curry and Curry Carter. Peyton Cochran was City Attorney and George Cochran had recently returned from Baltimore to practice with his father. Bill Moffett, Rudolph Bumgardner and C. M. Elder were established young lawyers.

Duncan Curry was Referee in Bankruptcy and a behind the scene politician. Frank Williamson was Civil and Police Justice and W. Terrell Sheehan was Augusta County Trial Justice. Cap (T. R.) Nelson and his father, R. E. R. Nelson, had a chancery practice. L. W. H. Peyton maintained an office, but had many outside interests. The Waynesboro contingent of the bar was composed of C. G. Quesenbery, a member of the legislature, Guy H. Branaman, certainly the most vociferous and colorful, Louis Jordan, a cordial and gracious gentleman of the old school, Felix E. Edmunds,

Humes Franklin, Sr., and J. B. Yount, Sr. There were no women at the bar and only one black, "Lawyer Morris" as he was known by the members of his race. Incidentally, Morris was the receiver of the Dime Savings Bank, the only bank in Staunton that did not open after the March (1933) bank holiday called by President Roosevelt as one of his first acts.

I find it interesting, if not unusual, that the progeny of some Staunton families have pursued the practice of law unto the third and fourth generations. There have been four generations of Peytons, four generations of Cochrans, four generations of Bumgardners, four generations of Elders, three generations of Nelson's and three generations of Bells. These and others have given the best of their labors, learning and talents to give the Augusta Bar a fine reputation in Virginia. As it has been said "The past is at least secure." The motto on the public seal of Augusta County is pertinent, "let the ages return to the first golden period." The law is a great and noble profession and a profound law teacher has eloquently expressed a criterion for the legal profession:

"That those alone, may be servants  
of the law, who labor with learning,  
courage and devotion to preserve  
liberty and promote justice."

(Buckler 1931)

The authorities chiefly relied on this article are Waddell's "Annals of Augusta County", reports of the Virginia Bar Association, "Virginia Cavalcade", Robertson's "Alexander Hugh Holmes Stuart", Gordon's "In the Picturesque Shenandoah Valley" and Opie's "A Rebel Cavalryman".



## TRACKS TO THE PAST A HISTORY OF THE WEYERS CAVE TRAIN STATION

By

Linda Petzke

"There she comes, hell on wheels".<sup>1</sup> These are the supposed words shouted by James Reed as he and other area farmers watched the hissing, steaming locomotive come to a stop in front of a not yet completed railroad depot in Augusta County, Virginia. The date for this momentous occasion was March 3, 1874.

As early as the 1830's, the possibility of bringing the railroad to the Shenandoah Valley had been explored. By 1836, tracks had been completed from Winchester to Harpers Ferry by the Winchester and Potomac Railroad Company. This company was purchased in 1848 by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. With the new owners, additional tracks were placed from Winchester to Strasburg.<sup>2</sup>

By the end of the Civil War, the entire Shenandoah Valley realized the importance and need for an increase in rail transportation. If further economic development was to occur in the Valley, track construction was paramount. By 1868, rails connected the Manassas Gap Railroad to

Harrisonburg and the first train arrived in Harrisonburg December 11 of that same year.<sup>3</sup> Still other areas of the Valley desired rail transportation. A charter had been issued in 1866 to the Valley Railroad, a railroad promoted by returning Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

Securing right-of-ways, building bridges, building depots, all took time. Finally, by spring 1874, the railroad to Staunton was operational.<sup>4</sup>

March 4, 1874 was the chosen date for the initial run. This date would coincide with the annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South scheduled to be held in Staunton. The Valley Railroad began to advertise the running of trains in addition to offering a half fare rate for round-trip tickets.<sup>5</sup>

The train did indeed make its maiden run on that date; however there was no depot or freight station in Staunton at that time. According to local newspapers, the first train on the Valley Railroad had six cars. Other special trains, with railroad officials as passengers, did run prior to the actual scheduled beginning date of April, 1874.<sup>6</sup>

The coming of a railroad to the area presently called Weyers Cave brought mixed reviews. Some believed a railroad would facilitate the community's growth by bringing people and new businesses. Others believed the railroad would be a menace to both cattle and horses.<sup>7</sup> Help or hindrance, the railroad stop needed a name. The Valley Railroad officials referred to the station as Cave Station, named after the three nearby caves discovered in 1804 by trapper Bernard Weyer.<sup>8</sup>

So on April 1, 1874, the Valley Railroad, a branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, began its operation. Trains, consisting of passenger as well as freight cars, ran in both directions everyday except Sunday. After departing Weyers Cave, southbound trains would stop in Mount Sidney, Fort Defiance, Verona, and Staunton. Trains could also proceed northward to Harrisonburg and on through the Valley to Winchester.

On February 19, 1874, I. B. Kagey and S. D. McCommon signed an agreement with the Valley Railroad Company to build "a depot furnished with all necessary office equipment and other fixtures plus a store at a cost of \$2,325.00."<sup>9</sup> In July of 1874, the post office was also established in the depot. I. B. Kagey was not only the first ticket agent but also the first postmaster for the area as well as the proprietor of the mercantile which he operated in the east wing of the depot building. Kagey, a true entrepreneur, bought McCommon's interest in the store in 1879. For ten years, Kagey managed the depot and all other businesses within.<sup>10</sup>

During the first fifteen years, the village grew slowly. The community, brought into existence by the railroad, had a name, but the new railroad did not automatically bring rapid growth. Still, changes had begun to take place in the community of Weyers Cave. By the turn of the century, blacksmiths, a cooper, and even a "hotel" were in the vicinity.

The Weyers Cave community was now part of the Valley Railroad. As part of this system, the community was in need of a depot. Plans for the

depot were begun in 1873-1874 when Fred Cline sold a piece of land to the railroad company. Cline also arranged with the railroad line to transport passengers by "hack" from the station to the caverns. As the locomotive approached, whistle blasts sounded indicating the arrival of passengers desiring a cavern visit. Upon hearing the blasts, Cline or his son would proceed to the depot to accommodate the visiting tourists.<sup>11</sup>

By 1889, I. B. Kagey left the depot, selling the railroad depot to the railroad company for the construction price of \$2,325.00. M. D. Lindamood, a telegrapher which Kagey was not, took over the depot operations. Kagey moved his mercantile and post office to land near the railroad. Kagey's brother, N. I. Kagey came to work for his brother at that time. Like his brother, N. I. Kagey was a good businessman. He later established his own merchandising business, ran the first telephone switchboard, and was the first cashier of the Weyers Cave Bank when it opened in 1905.<sup>12</sup>

The railroad business had improved vastly by 1910. Two passenger trains and a freight train ran each direction daily. More and more supplies were brought in and local farm products taken out. The stores in the area continued to prosper. Weyers Cave became a livestock shipping center with frequent horse sales in the depot yard on certain Saturdays.<sup>13</sup> In the early part of the century, mail was also added to the trains. The first northbound train would arrive as early as six a.m. to both deliver and pick up mail.

In a 1929 study of Augusta County, Clay Catlett found Weyers Cave to be a rapidly developing area, which was fast becoming a commercial center for the northern sector of the County. Catlett noted that "Weyers Cave has become the largest shipping point between Staunton and Harrisonburg".<sup>14</sup> By this time, many of the roads in the area had been macadamized thus facilitating transport to the depot and immediate vicinity.

The stick style depot, so typical of the late nineteenth-century, housed many community functions, becoming a general meeting area for local residents. The central projecting east wing, with its large entry doors opening to the main road, housed the general store. Here, community residents could exchange butter, eggs, bacon, dried apples, and other locally produced goods for hardware, utensils, clothing, shoes, hats, even remedies. On the second floor of this wing was a small apartment, which Lindamood utilized for his family.

The depot's south and north wings, which extended parallel to the depot tracks, housed the railroad services. The north wing provided freight storage, with a wide platform for loading and unloading the freight. Light freight was loaded and unloaded by hand. Heavier freight was slid along the platform on skids.<sup>15</sup> As the freight loads grew, the storage area also expanded, with a frame shed addition built along the west side of this wing.

The south wing contained the passenger waiting area and general railroad service areas. This wing was divided into two rooms, the waiting room off the central general store, and the office area at the end of the wing. Stationary wooden benches, divided into individual seats with cast-iron

armrests, provided seating for the passengers in the waiting room.<sup>16</sup> The ticket window opened into the agent's office. An iron, pot-bellied, coal-burning stove heated both the waiting room and the railroad office. To the south, the office area included a large workbench used for the telegraph equipment. To the left of the operator were two long levers used to raise and lower the semaphore paddles of the signal post.<sup>17</sup>

The Weyers Cave train depot reflects the history of Weyers Cave. The original train depot with its general store, ticket office/workroom, and small freight storage area began when there was only a small group of dwellings in this area. But the town and the train station both grew in the years to come. By 1929, Catlett reported that Weyers Cave boasted a population of 250 inhabitants, and that the town was indeed becoming a commercial center. Why did this train station and community develop and yet just a few miles to the south the community of Fort Defiance did not? The two stations were built in the same year and were on the same train runs. Why the discrepancies with these two communities?

The answer to this question may reflect the community's acceptance of change. Weyers Cave had a central location half-way between both Harrisonburg and Staunton. This convenient location encouraged new businesses to develop in the area. Local farmers shipped livestock from Weyers Cave to other areas. The new railroad brought more tourists to visit the caves, and the community welcomed the tourism. Blacksmiths, carpenters, mercantiles and a bank established businesses in the vicinity of the train depot, thus expanding the commercial district.

To keep pace with the changes in the community, the depot, too, had to undergo some changes. Telegraph equipment was added as part of the depot services. A new agent arrived and chose to reside in an apartment in the depot. The burgeoning agricultural trade necessitated an enlargement of the freight area. Destroying the original symmetrical design, the new freight shed addition replaced the porch with much needed storage space.

Today, the Weyers Cave train depot is still under the ownership of the railroad company. Southern States uses the building for storage. The station has not been officially used since the mid-1960's. The Weyers Cave Station is one of a few railroad depots left standing in Augusta County today. The interior of this well-preserved structure still has many of the original features. The Weyers Cave train depot remains a cornerstone of the Weyers Cave community even today as well as an important landmark in Augusta County and the Valley of Virginia.

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### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Harold E. Skelton, *Weyers Cave's First Century 1874-1974* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Park View Press, 1974), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* p. 9.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* p. 9.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>7</sup>C. E. May, *My Augusta A Spot of Earth Not a Woman* (Bridgewater, Virginia: Good Printers, Inc. 1987), p. 218.

<sup>8</sup>Harold E. Skelton, *Weyers Cave's First Century 1874-1974* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Park View Press, 1974), p. 11.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* p. 69.

<sup>10</sup>C. E. May, *My Augusta a Spot of Earth Not a Woman* (Bridgewater, Virginia: Good Printers, Inc., 1987), p. 218.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.* p. 219.

<sup>12</sup>Harold E. Skelton, *Weyers Cave's First Century 1874-1974* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Park View Press, 1974), p. 20.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.* p. 26.

<sup>14</sup>Clay Catlett, *An Economic and Social Survey of Augusta County* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Record Extension Series, Vol. 12, No. 7, January 1928), p. 28.

<sup>15</sup>Harold E. Skelton, *Weyers Cave's First Century 1874-1974* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Park View Press, 1974) p. 76.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.* p. 76.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.* p. 76.

# **PRESBYTERIAN FIGHTS, FITS, AND STARTS**

## **Organizing the First General Assembly, 1786-1789**

### **The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America**

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In 1788 Jedediah Chapman chose his text with care when he preached before the Synod of New York and Philadelphia. He had served as moderator of the body in 1787. He knew better than most the fits and starts and even fights in which Presbyterians had been involved in organizing for the first meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1789. As the Synod gathered, he explored with its members in the American context the meaning of Ephesians 4:3-4, in which the author urges us Christians "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Although Americans had been victorious in the War for Independence, the conflict caused considerable dislocation in American life. Americans faced numerous challenges. They engaged in reordering public life under state and national Constitutions. Some thought that the new nation was not prospering under the Articles of Confederation over which Presbyterian Elias Boudinot had presided in 1782. Americans also repaired the walls of Zion. Several denominations organized nationally during the 1780s, as did the Presbyterians. Our Presbyterian forebears lived in all the states of the nation, so we had some difficulty organizing the General Assembly. According to the meetings of the synod, very few presbyters, clergy or lay, attended the meetings of the chief governing body of Presbyterians, partially because of conditions in the aftermath of the war and the costs and dangers of traveling to Philadelphia where the meetings were then held. Several presbyteries deplored the low spiritual and moral life of the country. Under the leadership of well-placed Presbyterians such as George Duffield of Philadelphia, former chaplain of the Continental Congress; John Rodgers of New York, former chaplain of the Continental Army; and John Witherspoon (who had immigrated from Scotland in 1768), signer of the Declaration of Independence and president of the College of New Jersey (now

Princeton University), our Presbyterian ecclesiastical cooks began to form The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, which was adopted in 1788 and was implemented in 1789. The pursuit of the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" in the reorganization of the church in the 1780s was not a smooth one which made everyone happy, but we succeeded in the task and started our journey of faith and life together.

We should note that in 1791, the new General Assembly began to make provisions for the gathering of historical documents having to do with Presbyterian faith and life on this side of the Atlantic, following the lead of Ebenezer Hazard, Presbyterian businessman and public official, responsible for publishing the first volumes of American State Papers. Because of the historical consciousness of these early church leaders, we have a rather good portrait of our ancestors, warts and all, a picture which ought to cure us of nostalgia for the good old days. On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the first meeting of the General Assembly, we should pause, and remind ourselves of the fits and starts and fights in which our forebears engaged to deal with our confession, our worship, our structure, and our public stance. Such recollection may help us take heart today.

## I

In the first part of our ecclesiastical Constitution which we adopted in 1788, we included a slightly amended Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as systematic expressions of our faith and life, written in the seventeenth century as "containing the system of doctrine taught in the holy scriptures." Here Presbyterians pointed beyond the Westminster Standards to the Bible as the canon of our beliefs and behavior. We were concerned during these years with the printing and circulation of the Bible. In the early years of the 1780s, Philadelphian Robert Aitken, a Presbyterian printer, published the first Bible in English in America on paper wholly manufactured in America—the first all-American Bible. Congress commended the project but did not provide a subvention for the Good Book. Aitken made a little history, but unfortunately, the well-intentioned Aitken never made any money. Bibles from Britain became available again after the war. During the first General Assembly of 1789, the commissioner expressed concern for the printing and circulation of the Bible, appointing a number of its members to gain subscriptions for a new effort to publish and promote the Bible in order to spread the "knowledge of eternal life contained" therein.

By affirming the Westminster Standards, we indicated one dimension of our identity. We are a confessing people. The Minutes indicate that there was little or no disagreement about this matter, even over the amendments. The members of the synod amended portions of Chapters 20, 23, and 31 dealing with the Civil Magistrate. As early as 1729, American Presbyterians agreed that the relationship between the Civil Magistrate and religious

institutions as they were described in the Westminster Standards of the seventeenth century did not apply to the American context on this side of the Atlantic. In 1788 we officially declared the church's independence of the civil authorities, holding that they had no responsibility for discipline within the church or in the administration of the Word and Sacraments. We also held that the magistrate should treat Presbyterians and other denominations of Christians in a non-preferential way, and protect all citizens in the exercise of the rights of conscience in religious matters. Moreover, members of the synod deleted from the Larger Catechism references to intolerance of "false religion," indicating an early acknowledgment that we live in a pluralistic society. Some Presbyterians were anxious about the implication of these confessional changes. Some of our forebears thought we might carry tolerance too far. Charles Nisbet of Carlisle Presbytery, president of Dickinson College, worried about giving license to "anythingarians" and "nothingarians," something not good for religion or morality or the new nation, according to this recent Scottish immigrant. The synod explicitly warned Presbyterians to be on the alert against false winds of doctrine. Universalism was not only blowing in the wind but organizing in Philadelphia during this period. The synod condemned it as a dangerous doctrine, "subversive of the fundamental principles of Religion and Morality." Thus, as the synod launched the General Assembly, it indicated that Presbyterians would take seriously responsibility to witness to the world what we believe to be true about God and our nature and destiny.

## II

The synod also adopted as a part of our original constitution as a denomination The Directory for the Worship of God, calling attention to the fact that we are, first and foremost, a worshipping people. Revising considerably the Directory which we inherited from the Westminster Assembly of the seventeenth century, we asserted our desire for freedom and also form in our worship. The synod eliminated the pattern prayers which had been included in a draft of this Directory, and committed itself to a book of advise to clergy and congregation about worship. Among other counsel included, the synod advised Presbyterians to keep the "whole" Lord's Day "holy to the Lord," to gather for worship in "gravity and reverence," and to abstain from "all whisperings, from salutations of persons present or coming in, and from gazing about, sleeping, smiling, and all other indecent behavior." Although the minutes do not reveal the debate over aspects of this Directory, Presbyterians were not unanimous in their attitudes toward elements of prayer, praise, and preaching.

We have already mentioned, for example, that the synod eliminated pattern prayers and emphasized freedom in lifting up our hearts to God. It also gave rather detailed instructions about what constitutes the proper address of Almighty God. The synod also urged Presbyterians to increase



and improve congregational singing. John Adams, an inveterate sermon taster on his trips from Boston to Philadelphia, also savored church music as he hopped from church to church. He described the praise of a Presbyterian church he attended in New York City as sounding like "all the drawling, quavering discord in the world." As he passed on through Princeton to Philadelphia, he noted in his journal that the scholars there sang "as badly as the Presbyterians" in the city. In the Directory the synod urged congregations to use psalms and hymns—presumably hymns of human composition, as they were called—to give up lining out the words, to cultivate the rules of music, and to sing with the heart as well as with the voice. Earlier, the synod had opened the way for congregations to sing "Dōctr: Watts Immitation of David's Psalms as revised by Mr. Barlow" as well as Rouse's versification, which had been used since the days of the Westminster Assembly. An Adam Rankin came out of Kentucky to protest this movement away from the biblical, orthodox, and seventeenth-century version of the Psalms. Members of the synod and newly formed General Assembly had to deal with Rankin's scruples. He believed he had a vision. He believed he had been commanded by God in the vision to remonstrate with other Presbyterians about this apostasy in our praise. A committee was appointed which listened to him at length. His brethren were unable to persuade him to modify his positions, nor to convince him of the need for Presbyterians to improve and introduce greater variation in their praise. Rankin and Rankinites caused the Rankin schism over opposition to singing other than Rouse's version of the Psalms in our worship. This was the first of several divisions which our denomination has suffered during the years since the founding of the General Assembly.

The synod must have spent some time in discussing the responsibilities of the minister in worship as well as in dealing with the education, licensing, and ordination of persons to the office of teaching elder. According to the Directory, the minister plays a leadership role in worship, especially in reading and interpreting the Word and administering the sacraments. With regard to preaching, the synod admonishes ministers to prepare sermons with care, and not to indulge in "loose, extemporary harangues" nor serve God with exposition "which cost them naught." Moreover, ministers were not to preach too long to the exclusion of the "more important duties of prayer and praise," to which a "just proportion" of time was to be allotted. In adopting these provisions about preaching in the Directory, members of the synod seem to have been in agreement. The American environment, however, was not the most congenial for a learned clergy. Hugh Henry Brackenridge, out on the Pittsburg frontier, a Presbyterian preacher turned lawyer and author, tells about the different preferences among Americans, even among American Presbyterians. In his novel entitled Modern Chivalry, written during the 1790s, the hero comes upon a church meeting in which the people are confronted with questions about the shape of the ministry. One immigrant from Ireland, dressed in a black coat, has accused another man of stealing his ministerial credentials on a voyage across the ocean. In

order to settle the dispute, the hero arranges a preaching competition. The first man picks his text, Proverbs 8:33: "Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not." He preaches a two-point sermon with several subpoints, attacking indolence, pride, and passion. He draws inferences that his opponent is no more than a "yarn merchant" and a thief. The imposter, who has never preached a sermon in his life, strings together some biblical references stretching from Genesis to Revelation which make no sense at all. When the vote is taken, the older members of the congregation show their preference for the first preacher, while the lay people and some of the younger clergy expressed their pleasure with the second. The hero of the novel proclaims that they both showed considerable gifts. In this new country there was work enough for both of them. Brackenridge poked fun at the learned clergy of the Presbyterian Church, but he was also cautious about elevating illiterate Irish "bogtrotters," as he called them, to positions of ecclesiastical as well as political power. Although the synod came down on the side of thoughtful instruction in preaching and against ill-considered and unstructured "extemporary harangues," it was not able, apparently, to dictate the tastes of Americans for sermonizing.

### III

This fictional reference to this church meeting brings us to a third part of the Constitution adopted for the General Assembly by the synod, The Form of the Government and Discipline, together with Forms of Process in the Judicatories of this Church to declare to the world that we Presbyterians are generally a people of decency and order in our corporate life. The Form is introduced by a "few of the general principles" of our polity which pertain to our belief that "God alone is Lord of Conscience" even in ecclesiastical matters, principles still a part of our polity. We affirmed Presbyterianism as a representative system involving both clergy and laity. We related the part to the whole, giving authority and power to presbyteries and responsibility for the welfare of the whole and review of the work of the lower governing bodies to the General Assembly. We acknowledged the people's right to choose their clerical and lay leaders, although we were not altogether clear on how lay leaders were to be chosen. We gave the presbytery the responsibility of ordaining and installing ministers.

The synod circulated a draft of the Form in 1787 for comment by presbyteries. Not many presbyteries responded, and some presbyters were hostile to the aspects of the plan for the General Assembly, and restructuring the church. Matthew Wilson, moderator of the synod in 1786, when restructuring got underway, thought that the plan contained some things out of keeping with Scripture. It sounded like a "human creature" to him. A friend, John Miller, wrote that Wilson thought the brethren were trying to "cram ye Scotch Hierarchy" down the throats of Presbyterians. Miller

himself claimed that he wanted to love and live in peace with all. However, he did not intend "to adopt any plan of church government yt has no foundation in ye Christian institution." The synod read and tabled Wilson's criticisms. The synod had to deal with the more serious threat by the Presbytery of Suffolk not to participate in the forming of the General Assembly in 1787. This reluctance caused considerable concern among the brethren. Moderator Jedediah Chapman signed a letter from synod to the presbytery calling attention to the synod's belief that the plan proposed was agreeable in principle with ideas of the Westminster Assembly of the seventeenth century. The synod letter reminded the presbytery of the "seamless coat of Christ" and that Presbyterians were members one of another. The synod even tried to shame the recalcitrants: "Shall all other sects and parties be united among themselves for their support and increase, and presbyterians divided and subdivided, so as to be the scorn of some and the prey of others!" In order to deal with this mutiny, the synod appointed a high level committee to visit with the malcontents of Suffolk Presbytery and calm their anxieties. The pleas prevailed and the presbytery became a part of the General Assembly.

We can see in the minutes of these years how much time was given by our forebears to sending out itinerants to preach the good news of Jesus Christ and organizing churches on the various frontiers of the new nation. Although we confessed that God calls the church into existence, we also realized that persons became members of the church in the American context voluntarily. They had to be persuaded to attend, and also to support the ministry with their financial resources. In addition to promises a minister made to a congregation, the service for the installation of ministers in the Form contained promises to which a congregation agreed. Members were to provide "competent worldly maintenance" and whatever else needful for "the honour of religion" and the minister's "worldly comfort." The Presbyterians, we should recall, had lived without state support of the church throughout the whole colonial period. But they were still getting used to the new way of supporting the work of the denomination. "Father" David Rice, immigrating from Virginia, responsible for planting Presbyterianism in Kentucky, had an experience which indicated the uncertainties of the ministerial profession. Apparently, for some reason, his congregation in Danville cut off his salary. So he refused to administer the sacrament of communion. A poet, who happened to be the town drunk, composed a bit of doggerel "On PARSON R-E, Who refused to Perform Divine Service till his arrears were Paid."

Ye fools! I told you once or twice,  
You'd hear no more from canting R-e;  
He cannot settle his affairs,  
Nor pay attention unto pray'rs,  
Unless you pay up your arrears.  
O how he would in pulpit storm,  
And fill all hell with dire alarm!  
Vengeance pronounce against each vice,  
And, more than all, curs'd avarice;  
Preach'd money was the root of ill,  
Consign'd each rich man unto hell;  
But since he finds you will not pay,  
Both rich and poor may go that way.  
'Tis no more than I expected —  
The meeting-house is now neglected:  
All trades are subject to this chance,  
No longer pipe, no longer dance.

This is the kind of behavior which caused Nisbet, while lecturing on moral philosophy at Dickinson College, to muse. Americans, who thought every man was a politician, would soon start writing books such as "Every Man his Lawyer," "Every Man his own Physician," and certainly "Every Man his own Clergyman and Confessor." Rice's financial woes point to larger financial concerns of the new denomination. At the very first General Assembly, the members sent a letter to the new synods calling for attention to the need for unity of Presbyterians and for presbytery representatives to attend the new Assembly so that it could carry on its business. To that end it urged the lower governing bodies to see to it that commissioners could pay expenses to attend meetings and to ensure that congregations would be supplied in their absence. With such fits and starts we implemented our Form of Government and Discipline.

Before bringing this matter to a close, I wish to return to Jedediah Chapman, who helped guide the church through these years toward the adoption of our ecclesiastical Constitution and the first meeting of the General Assembly. In 1788 he preached about the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The Minutes indicate clearly that during these years Presbyterians were concerned not only for American Presbyterianism, but also for the whole body of Christ. We were engaged in correspondence with Congregationalists, the Associate Reformed Church, and the Dutch Reformed Church about the possibility of greater cooperation and even unity among Christians, not only for the sake of purity and peace of the body of Christ, but also for the sake of our witness in the new nation. We have other evidence that our members built bridges to Episcopalians, with whose polity we did not fully agree, and to Methodist, with whom we had considerable



doctrinal differences. Both of these denominations organized national organizations during these years. We joined with them in seeking the good of the whole.

## IV

In reviewing this early development of our original ecclesiastical organization, we find that from the beginning we Presbyterians showed ourselves a people concerned for the public good. We find no direct reference in the Minutes to the writing and ratification of the Constitution of the United States of America beginning in the spring of 1787 and continuing into 1788. This is somewhat disappointing in light of the fact that ten Presbyterian laymen attended the Constitutional Convention, and clergy such as John Witherspoon and David Caldwell and Francis Cummins attended state ratifying conventions. They disagreed among themselves over the momentous political event. Witherspoon and Cummins supported the political covenant, while Caldwell attacked the instrument of government in North Carolina. In the Minutes of 1787 we do read about "tumultuous & riotous proceedings" but with respect to "political differences" in Abingdon Presbytery in southwest Virginia. Followers of William Graham and Hezekiah Balch had a falling out and fell upon one another over the provisions of the Constitution for the state of Frankland, now Tennessee, which Graham helped to write. Noise of this fight reverberated all the way up the Valley to the City of Brotherly Love. The synod of 1788 urged an investigation, proper disciplinary action, and the restoration of peace among the brethren over this early Presbyterian brawl.

Presbyterians showed concern for two other matters related to what was going on in public affairs during these formative years. In the spring of 1787 the Committee on Overtures brought in a statement about the institution of slavery. The members of the synod must have discussed the matter at some length, since the first version seems to be stronger than a second, which was adopted. The synod acknowledged that the "Creator of the World" had made "of one flesh all the children of men," and had made us members of the "same family." Then on the grounds that slavery was contrary to the "rights of humanity" and the "obligations of Christianity," it urged constituents to extend the "blessings of equal freedom to every part of the human race." Presbyterians should do everything "consistent with the rights of civil Society to promote the abolition of Slavery, and the instruction of Negroes whether bond or free." After consideration, the synod adopted a more cautious proposal suggesting that slaves be prepared for participation in the "privileges of civil society" at a "moderate rate." Thus we proposed to "procure eventually the final abolition of Slavery in America." This early policy statement may be considered a compromise, a result illustrating very early a propensity toward compromise in our Presbyterian system. Still, it

was stronger than the position taken by our "political cooks"—as politicians were sometimes called in the eighteenth century—during the Constitutional Convention in the summer of 1787. Presbyterian William Davie, representing North Carolina in the Constitutional Convention, proposed that slaves be counted as three-fifths of a human being so that white representation in the Congress might be increased. And Hugh Williamson, who had been licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, also representing North Carolina with Davie, deplored slavery but argued that the institution should stand for the sake of national unity. So we began our debate over America's great moral dilemma.

In 1789, during the same year in which our General Assembly met for the first time, the nation inaugurated George Washington as first President of the United States of America. In a very flattering letter signed by the newly elected moderator, John Rodgers, we Presbyterians congratulated Washington on the occasion. The General Assembly expressed thanks to the Virginian for his service in the "late arduous conflict for freedom" and for his part in moderating the "division of political parties" making the "permanent establishment of the civil government" possible. It expressed happiness that Washington had accepted the call to public service once again and for being "friend of the Christian religion" and an "amiable example of piety to God...." The Minutes of 1790 contain the polite and grateful response from the new chief magistrate. Presbyterians, we should note, were not united in their opinions about the new chief executive. Washington furthermore summoned troops in 1796 and marched west to put down the Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania. Some of our more cantankerous members were involved in the rebellion, since they did not like the taxes imposed on the grain which they had turned into liquid. The Synod of Virginia was meeting. William Graham believed that the insurgents had a case, while Moses Hoge, of the newly formed Hampden-Sydney College, urged the rebels to remember Romans 13 and subject themselves to the constitutional authorities. Nisbet, near the eye of the storm in Carlisle, did not think Americans had sense enough to govern themselves and in a sermon urged the President to put down this rebellion of the "sovereign people," some of whom were Presbyterian. His friends feared that he would be tarred and feathered. Thus, in addition to drawing up and implementing our ecclesiastical Constitution with our Westminster standards, our Directory for the Public Worship of God and our Form of Government and Discipline, we began to play a role, a small role to be sure, in public affairs as Christians and a Christian community.

Presbyterian women are notably absent from our record. They were not present in the meetings of the Synod and General Assembly which I have been describing. That does not mean, of course, that they were not present in the church. In 1789, the year the General Assembly met, Isabella Marshall Graham arrived in New York. Mrs. Graham, a widow and mother of five, had been resident in Canada where her husband served in the British army

before his death. Upon her return to Paisley, Scotland, she started a small school and increased her reputation and her income as a teacher. Witherspoon, the former pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Paisley, encouraged Graham and her daughters to come to America. Graham and her family did so and began a girls' school in New York. She was able to retire and devote her life to philanthropy. She and her daughter, Joanna Bethune, began helping a variety of dispossessed people. Moreover, they were deeply involved in starting the Sunday School Movement in America. Some Presbyterians, for example, the young Presbyterian minister Samuel Miller, were reading Mary Wollstonecraft's famous tract, *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Because of the English woman's unorthodoxy in religion and her sexual mores, the men were unable to hear her about the rights of women in an age when the men were so concerned for their own liberties. While the women began to rule over the "empire of affection," education, and charity, they had to wait for the recognition of their rights and talents in ecclesiastical as well as civic matters.

Our first General Assembly met in Philadelphia in the spring of 1789. Although John Rodgers was elected our first moderator, the venerable John Witherspoon was given the honor of convening the meeting and preaching the first sermon. He preached on the text from 1 Corinthians 3:7, according to the *Minutes*: "So then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." He preached to a denomination which numbered, according to the first statistics of the General Assembly, recorded in 1789, 177 ministers, 11 probationers, 215 congregations with ministers, and 205 vacant congregations. When John Rodgers preached his moderatorial sermon at the meeting of the General Assembly of 1790, he focused on Barnabas, the early missionary who was, according to Rodgers' text of Act 11:24, "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord."

Although our Presbyterian forebears expressed their historical consciousness during these years by making provisions to gather and write the history of the denomination to that date, they were also looking ahead to the future, as the Witherspoon and Rodgers texts suggest. In 1790, the name of David Austin, a young clergyman, appeared on the rolls of the General Assembly as a commissioner. Austin, a New Englander, had been called to the pastorate of the Elizabeth-town Presbyterian Church, the congregation of which Elias Boudinot was a member. Austin made a name for himself by editing four volumes of *The American Preacher* in which he printed sermons of notable ministers to provide guidance to laity and also models of good preaching for other clergy. He also made a name for himself because of his interest in the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments and his writings on the coming of the millennium and the imminent return of Christ. After a bout with scarlet fever, he boldly predicted that the millennium would dawn in May, 1796. Prophecy failed. Jesus did not come, and the congregation asked the presbytery to dissolve the relationship between itself and Austin. Some more cautious Presbyterians thought the millennium

would come in due time. I relate this tale about David Austin to suggest that Presbyterians such as Witherspoon and Rodgers did look to the future, as well as the past, expansively and with expectation.

We turn now to the present after reviewing some of the fights and fits and starts of these early years of American Presbyterianism. We are observing and celebrating the 200th anniversary of the first General Assembly. At this time, we are busy building the walls of Zion again, moving the General Assembly headquarters to Louisville, Kentucky, considering the adoption of a Brief Statement of Faith for our time as a confessing church, developing resources for our contemporary worship, drawing appropriate presbytery and synod lines, and amending the *Book of Order*, in a word, dealing with many of the same things our forebears had to face two hundred years ago. Discussing with each other what it means to be obedient in a nuclear age, we are having our own fights, fits, and starts. While we have been losing members in recent years for a variety of reasons, we have grown considerably since 1789. According to our General Assembly statistics, we now number 19,842 ministers, 11,593 congregations, and over 3,000,000. We should take heart and celebrate our 200th birthday. We have a goodly heritage, although our review of our history ought not to make us nostalgic about our past. We are a goodly company. We should move into our next century, indeed, into the third millennium of the Christian era, endeavoring to preserve the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," men and women "full of the Holy Spirit and of faith," planting and watering, with the assurance that God will bring forth a goodly harvest.

# WHO WAS THOMAS GARBER THAT WE SHOULD WEEP FOR HIM

By

J. Susanne Simmons

## Part I

Correspondence comprised a vital part of a soldier's life during the Civil War. Written on the hard surface of a canteen, knapsack, or stump, descriptions of the camp, the march, or the battle reached those left at home. Letter writing reached mass proportions because for the first time so many men lived so far from home. Because a letter from a soldier could easily be the last earthly communication from that man, letters written by soldiers were more apt to be preserved than the ones received in camp.

A significant share of letters were penned by a class of people who traditionally did not articulate their experiences in writing. Thousands of fading letters kept in attics and archives provides fertile ground for the social historian. Unlike a memoir written years later, or a newspaper story written for the purpose news reporting or newspaper sales, letters from the front came from the heart. It is exciting to hold in your hand the letters written from a soldier trying to describe his life and express his sentiments in the appropriate language of the day. Personal correspondence, especially from the American Civil War, represents a genuine piece of the past.

Fifteen letters in the Augusta County Historical Society Archives are all that are left of Thomas Garber, a brother, son, nephew, cousin, and Confederate soldier. Through them a young man speaks about his life as regimental color-bearer of the 12th Regiment Virginia Cavalry. The following transcription of twelve of those letters with commentary attempts to flesh out his experience. The transcriptions are exact. No attempt has been made to correct spelling, punctuation, or grammar. Crossed-out words and indecipherable words or phrases appear in square brackets [ ]. Parentheses appear as they do in the letter.

On April 17, 1861, the same day Virginia seceded from the Union, the Virginia Convention authorized Governor Letcher to call into service as many volunteers as needed to "repel the invasion and protect the citizens of the state in the present emergency."<sup>1</sup> Five days later the governor issued another proclamation ordering every armed and equipped volunteer company of artillery, infantry, and rifleman in the state to hold itself ready for immediate orders. In May a call for volunteers extended over the entire state.

A call-to-arms issued on May 30, 1861 by Michael Harman, the Quartermaster at Staunton and a first cousin to Thomas Garber, summoned the men of Staunton and Augusta County to volunteer:

Headquarters, Virginia Forces  
Staunton, Virginia

Men of Virginia, to the rescue. Your soil has been invaded by your abolition foes, and we call upon you to rally at once, and drive them back.

We want volunteers to march immediately to Grafton and report for duty.

Come one, come all and render the service due to your state and country. Fly to arms and succor your brave brothers how are now in the field...

The volunteers as soon as they report at the above point will be furnished with arms rations etc. etc.

Action Action will be our rallying motto. In the sentiment of Virginia's inspired orator "Give me Liberty or Give me Death" animate every loyal son of the Old Dominion. Let us drive back the invading foot of a brutal and desperate foe or leave a record to posterity that we died bravely defending our homes and our firesides, the honor of our wives, and daughters, and the sacred graves of our ancestors.

Done by authority

M. G. Harman, Major commanding at Staunton

J. M. Heck, Lieutenant Commander, Virginia Volunteers

R. E. Cowan, Major of Virginia Volunteers

May 30, 1861<sup>2</sup>

Reasons for volunteering were as many as the men who heeded the call. Many men sincerely hated the North and Northern politics designed to end the "peculiar institution." Caught up in the political passions of time, men answered the call issued by M. G. Harman. In an age of romance, a number of young men joined for more innocuous reasons. John Opie, of the Stonewall Brigade, recalled that a recent reading of Charles O'Malley's Irish Dragoons induced him to believe:

that war was a glorious thing; and so I went with many other thoughtless men and youths, and plunged heedlessly into a long and deadly war, without, at the time being able to give a reasonable why or wherefore.<sup>3</sup>

Still others, like John Schwinabart, a farmer from Elk Garden, Virginia (now West Virginia) gladly traded long hours behind the plow for the adventure of a good fight. He and several of his friends travelled a number of days to the nearest town to join the Confederate army only to find that Federal troops occupied the town. Not wanting to waste the trip, they subsequently joined the Union army.<sup>4</sup>

An absence of rhetoric regarding the Southern cause in Thomas Garber's letters indicates the sentiment held by many Shenandoah Valley inhabitants. Many resisted secession to the last. Yet the moment of political crisis called for a decision. Loyalty to Virginia superceded loyalty to the Union. Young Rebels like Thomas Garber, whose father owned a foundry and four slaves,<sup>5</sup> perhaps sought romance and adventure in the guise of the Southern cause, secretly believing the war would be a short affair.

Sons of prominent families rode about the country-side organizing companies for their command, "adding the weight of social position to that of patriotic zeal."<sup>6</sup> Even the most indifferent of men found it hard to resist enlistment. The necessary one hundred men were not, however, always forthcoming. Thomas Garber reported to his brother Mike that their brother "Ned", Edward Valentine Garber, was working to organize a company of volunteers.

June 29th 1861

Dear Brother Mike

I received your letter to day and as Cousin Fanny is going down to see [you] Cousin Tom this evening I thought I would awnser it right of and set you a good example. I will thank Cousin Sally and the rest of them for sending you the jacket & C. The company which Ned was Elected 1st Leiut in is called Southern Fencibles hardrun for names they have not been mustered into service yet but expect to be in a few day's Ned has been rideing around the cuntry getting more volinteers they have not enough men [by a] yet to mustered into service but will [?] have this week. Mag Garber is not here but is in Charlottesville or somewhere near there will be here in a couple of weeks I will give her a kiss for you and Ash too if you want me to excuse this short letter as I have not time to write any more

Ma told me to ask you if you wanted any writing papers and if you did to write soon and tell her your affectionate Bro

Thom. M Garber

Volunteers were received into companies. Companies, numbering a hundred men, were organized into regiments of ten companies each. Regiments of artillery, infantry, and cavalry were organized into brigades. Brigades were then organized into divisions. While the "Southern Fencibles" seems less so, colorful names like the Stonewall Brigade or the Laurel Brigade added an element of pride and identity to a company or brigade.

On July 9, 1861, Ned mustered Company A the 52nd Regiment Virginia Volunteers into service. In 1861 and 1862 Virginia infantry regiments were officially called "regiments of Virginia Volunteers."<sup>7</sup> Calling their company the Augusta Fencibles, the men enlisted for one year.<sup>8</sup> The election of officers was a common practice closely guarded by volunteers who made much ado of its employment.

Typically the rank of captain and colonel was voted to the man who had raised the company.<sup>9</sup> Predictably, men elected popular, undemanding officers to lead them instead of officers who could drill a company into shape. Election of officers led to jealousies, rivalry, and retribution by defeated candidates who would subsequently transfer or resign. Even though the practice of electing officers was frowned upon by the military high command, the practice was sanctioned by the Furlough and Bounty Act of December 1861.

The primary purpose of this act, however, was to extend the term of service. A fifty dollar bounty and a sixty day furlough was offered to any man who re-enlisted. Recruitment remained a problem, causing the Confederate Congress to pass the Conscription Act in April, 1862. This act kept in service for three additional years all men already enlisted and placed in service all white men between the ages of 18 and 35 not legally exempt. For many young men like Thomas Garber, eager to fight, age proved no obstacle.

A memorial stone at Thornrose Cemetery in Staunton, Virginia gives Thomas's birthday as June 12, 1846. No record exists of when or where Thomas mustered into the service. However, by January, 1862 Thomas had joined the cavalry.<sup>10</sup> A superb rider who had been raised in the saddle, "he was only seventeen years of age yet he was over six feet in height, splendidly built, and much more mature in every way than most boys of his age" his company commander later recalled.<sup>11</sup> His uncle, Asher Harman, colonel of the 12th Regiment Virginia Cavalry, wrote to Tom's parents that:

Tom is well, tell his mother that I have been very much & agreeably disappointed in him. When he left Staunton with me I thought he would be hard to manage & in truth I thought him little or no account. But I have found him not only usefull, generous & Brave to a fault, But I have found in him a pious regard for the truth, His word when given never broken, a disposition & temper rarely if ever ruffled, and for one of his age a Boy that one might be proud to call their son...I have made no request of Tom, but that it has been readily granted. He has thrown aside whiskey Smoking & Tobacco, and I think is trying very hard to be all that you & his mother desire him to be. I have not written this to flatter him, but as a just tribute to a good & gallant Boy.<sup>12</sup>

Tom Garber was part of the 7th Regiment Virginia Cavalry which consisted of a cumbersome 29 companies under the leadership of Turner Ashby. General Thomas J. Jackson seized the opportunity to reorganize the 7th in June 1862 after Ashby was killed at the end of Jackson's first valley campaign. The reorganization took place at Camp Ashby in Rockingham County. The 7th Virginia was reduced to its original ten companies. The 12th Regiment Virginia Cavalry, formed from the remaining nineteen companies, was subsequently re-organized into ten companies. These ten companies formed the nucleus of the future Laurel Brigade.

The Confederate soldier spent a great portion of his time within the narrow boundaries of a tent city known as a camp. Here life functioned under a chain of command that endeavored to drill military discipline into the fighting men. In between drills, men tended to the ordinary duties of gathering wood, carrying water, tending horses, and making camp generally more livable. Drinking, gambling, and fighting alleviated the inevitable boredom. Although Asher Harman alluded to Tom's taste for whiskey, Tom himself mentioned none of these pastimes. According to his letters, Tom seemed to occupy himself by visiting a variety of friends and relatives living throughout the Valley and Piedmont. A letter from Tom at this time describes life at Camp Ashby as well as his casting about for a place in the newly formed regiment.

Camp Ashby July 21st 1862

Dear Sister

We got to our camp about 6 O'clock Friday evening and picked out a place to pitch our tents and built a big fire sat down by it and waited until 9 or [ ] for the wagon to come up which our tents were in it did not come in time, so slept under a tree the first night. As we were coming down we met 10 or 12 Yanks coming in to town and every day some one or two are brought in to camp the Col sends them on to the provost Marshall office to be kept until he has a pretty good crowd and then send them on to Staunton. we are encamped about 2 1/2 or 3 miles from Harrisonburg on Dr. Gamble place about 1/4 of a mile from his house he was up to see us Sunday and asked me over to see him which I will do soon. I asked Cousin Ash what company he should advise me to join he said hold on a day or two until he could look a round and then he would tell me he is going to make color sergeant<sup>13</sup> but he has no collars yet so I am going to be his orderly until he get the flag. he sent Bunch to Staunton Saturday evening. I told him to tell Pas to send me some smoking tobacco and a pipe Bill Waddell has some good tabaco put up in bags 2 1/2 pound each tell pa to send me one of them. Cousin Asher & Lewis have gone out to see the companies drill and left me in charge at camp and about every 5 minutes some comes for a pass to go to

town the Col did not give me any orders about it so I refused them all. I don't believe there is any news in camp there are several yankees papers in camp the first one I get a hold of I will send it up to Ma give my love to all of the girls and tell Sister Seall she must write to me

Your affectionate Brother

Thos M Garber

Direct your letters

Thos M Garber

Care Col A W Harman

10 Reg VA Cav

Colonel Asher Waterman Harman, a cousin to Thomas Garber, became the regimental commander of the 12th Virginia Cavalry at the reorganization of Ashby's brigade. Previously a captain in the 5th Virginia Infantry, at the age of thirty-two Harman was not yet battle tested. His second and third in command were, respectively, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Horseley Burk of Botetourt County and a VMI graduate, and Thomas Benjamin Massie of Warren County who shared Harman's inexperience.

The first assignment to fall to the Twelfth was outpost duty in the middle and lower Valley, between New Market and Harpers Ferry. Skirmishes and raiding parties netted ten wagons, eighteen prisoners, forty horses, and a \$4,000 Union payroll captured in Jefferson County.<sup>14</sup>

On August 1, 1862 the Twelfth left the Valley to join Jackson east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. There, on August 9, 1862, The Twelfth scouted Jackson's extreme right during the Battle of Cedar Mountain near Culpeper. The days following the battle passed slowly as the Twelfth took up picket duty. A letter from Tom to his sister describes the battle in polite terms typical of that era. Following picket duty Tom paid a visit to a cousin in the neighborhood who baked bread for the young soldier.

Camp Gordonsville Aug 15th 1862

Dear Sister

I have wanted to write home but I have not had a chance I came up to Cousin John's for some bread and while they are cooking it I thought I would write a few lines home we have been on picket ever since Tuesday and just got off this morning. On Monday the whole Brigade were drawn up in line of battle I was sure we were going to have a fight but the "yanks" commenced to shell out and we left the field in double quick time Gen Robinson in the front I could see the Yankees very plainly they were about 1 mile off they had a great deal more men than we did I counted six Regiments of

them all mounted. You asked me what company I had joined, I have joined Capt C T O'Ferral's from Warren County Va he has some very nice men in his company. I am carrying the colors for the Regiment it is not as much trouble as I thought it was at first the only trouble I have is I cannot manage my horse very well by the way tell Pa to see Col Turk about them spurs tell him I am very much in need of a pair I have but one that is a very mean one Col Turk promised to have me a pair made at the state shop. I have seen Ash & Mike several times but have not see Ned but once and then I passed while was marching and I was caring a dispatch to Gen Jackson so I could not have much talk with him he was looking very well, how is Sister Seal I hope she is not very sick give my love to her and tell her I will write to her soon give my love to Pa, Ma, Kate and Nelly and all others who ask for me you mus excuse me for not writing soone but I have written a good many times and when I had finished the I would have to go somewhere and would put the letter in my pocket until it it was spoiled it is getting dark so I must stop I have to go 9 miles to night so you must excuse me for not finishing this sheet

Your Bro

Thos M Garber

Tom failed to tell his sister that his encounter with the Yankees was only a skirmish which occurred when Jackson withdrew north of the Rapidan to near Gordonsville on Monday, August 11.<sup>15</sup> The Battle of Cedar Mountain, fought on Saturday the 9th, was followed by skirmishes on Sunday the 10th. The still-baking bread afforded Tom the time to write a letter to his father in which he tells how he spent the day of August 9th, 1862, while the rest of his rgiment was otherwise engaged.

Camp Gordonsville Aug 15/62

Dear Father

I have just finished a letter for Addie and told her it was getting dark that I must hurray but Cousin is not ready for me to go so I thohgh I would write you a few lines as I ought to have done long ago.

I suppose you have herd all about the fight how many of our men were lost I did no we were fighting untill next morning while the fight was going I was having a very nice time Leuint Welch and my self had gone out to get something to eat and we stoped at Mr. Twimans it was about four o'clock when we stoped they asked us to have diner we told them we would they had Corn and Tamatoes prepared for us ice water fine milk with ice and the butter bread, ham, and lamb were dilightfull and to top it all of we had two of the

nicest youn ladies to talk you ever saw. Dear Father it is getting too dark to write you must excuse this short letter only on that account I will write you a longer one next time give my love to Ma and the girls and write soon to you son

Thos M Garber

Tom's graphic description of the sumptuous fare eaten at Mr. Twiman's illustrates the importance of food in a soldier's daily life; an opportunity to eat was far more important than a chance to fight the Yankees. Richmond never lived up to its promise to supply rations to its army based on the standard set by Washington for the Union Army.<sup>16</sup> To supplement his ration of cornbread and beef, the Confederate soldier constantly foraged for vegetables and fruits, and stole Federal rations whenever possible.

On August 19, Lee ordered Stuart and the cavalry to cross the Rapidan and destroy the railroad bridge at Rappahannock Station. Northeast of Stevensburg, the Laurel Brigade met the Yankees who in turn forced them to retreat to a better position between Brandy Station and Rappahannock Station. There, the Twelfth hit the Yankee center while the 6th and 7th Cavalry attacked the Federal flanks. The Yankees eventually retreated, and the Twelfth pulled back to Culpeper Court House.

On August 22, Stuart ordered the cavalry to cross the Rappahannock and head for Catlett Station where they were to destroy the Orange and Alexandria Railroad Bridge over Cedar Run. Heavy rain hampered the march. The Twelfth stayed behind to guard the artillery sinking in a muddy quagmire at Auburn while Stuart took the rest of the cavalry to Catlett.

On August 26, Stuart, having destroyed the bridge, gathered his forces and followed Jackson across the Bull Run Mountains south of Thoroughfare Gap. The next day Stuart captured Pope's supply depot at Manassas and a great feast was enjoyed by all. Pope, meanwhile fearing entrapment, retreated.

On August 30th, Jackson attacked Pope's column, engaging him in a battle now known as the Second Manassas. The 2nd Virginia Cavalry advanced toward Lewis Ford on Bull Run Creek where they hit an entire Federal brigade. The Twelfth and Seventh were called to advance. Harman ordered a charge into the center of the 1st West Virginia which drove them back upon their reserves. The Twelfth pursued the Federals to the stone bridge, stopping only when night fell. Tom related this charge in a letter to his father.



Sept 25 1862

Dear Father

In the las few weeks I have received several letters from Addie complaining that I did not write home atall but she is mistaken for I have wrien you one letter I have sent one to Kate and have wrien 3 or 4 times to Addie Addie also complaines that you know nothing about me at hom when were at Harrisonburg I wrote hom that I had join Co. I. Captain O'Ferralls Company and that Regiment is the 12th Va and now I will try to give you an account of myself since we left the Valley.

the Col has just give orders to saddle up I will finish this the first opportunity

(Sept 26) We passed through Charlestown yesterday & camped 4 or 5 miles of that place, We left Harrisonburg on the 1st day of August and after a march of 20 or 25 miles we encamped near John Lewis and on the next night we stayed at Michums river were we laid over sunday Cousin Jenny brought the Col a box which did a heap of good on the next night we stayed 7 miles form Charlottesville we laid over there to wait orders from Gen Jackson we were encamped near Cobhan Depot I rode out to see if I could hear any thing of Mr. Lewis I found his father and told Nicky had gone to Halifax to finish his education and was there arrested as a conscript put in the guard house and sent to Richmond where he got an appointment in the Q.M. Office we left that neighborhood on the next day and every [] has almost past like a dream since that [] has a good deal of hard marcing booth day and night. We laid around where they were fighting until Saturday when the whole Brigade started out full gallop for about 2 miles when our regiments & the 7th and the 2nd and 6th went on before as fast as they could gallop I did not know wat is ment when Old Stuart came and ordered Col Harman up with his regiment and we galloped a quarter of a mile and met the 2nd runing a way we past on through them to where I thought the 7th was drawn line when we got in 50 yards of them I found out my mistake for I could see the stars & stripes plainly then the Col ordered a charge I made right for the flag and shot at one but lost sight of it then caught up to a yankee runing like blazes I shot him through the back and tried to get him but he fell of of his horse and I went on to where the Col was he had halted near Bull run and tried to form the Regt On the top of the hill the other side of the Run there was 25 or 30 Yanks Capt Ford past on & told me to come with the flag I passed on in the creek and the whole line fired at me but did not hurt any one but came all aroun us we charged up the hill and broke the line and then Capt Ford, myself and two others men galloped off to left and captured 34 Yankees 8 horses & two Ambulances which we brought in to camp

8 of the men we brout in I captuered myself 12 of them and the Ambulances I and one of the took together. In the first part of the fight I lost my old black hat and the first Yankee I met I told him to give me his hat which he did the next one I met had a bran new one so I traded with him Dear father Bunch is about starting I cannot write any more I do not think because I do not write often it is because I do not want to or that I do not wish to hear from you for the true reason of my not writing [when I have time I am but tired when time do not think I am busy all the for often we do not see the wagons for 5 or 6 day] we are moving around all the time and we are very seldom with the wagons give my love to Ma, Addie Kate and Sister Ellen and tell them all to write to me and write soon yourself to your

Affectionate son  
Tho M Garber

Even though Tom was an official member of Company I, he functioned as the regimental color-bearer. O'Ferrall recalled that at some point a vacancy occurred in the color-sergeancy of the regiment. Tom Garber applied for and was given the position. In a letter written at the end of winter in April 1863 Tom added the word "color sergeant" to his signature, leading the reader to believe he received his promotion just prior to this time.

Following the Battle of Second Manassas, Robertson's Brigade moved to Fairfax Court House where they captured 120 Federal troops and entire company of the Tenth New York Cavalry without firing a shot. They remained at Fairfax until September 5, at which time they marched to Leesburg. It was not common knowledge that General Robert E. Lee planned to carry the war into the North.

On September 7, the Twelfth crossed the Potomac River with orders to occupy Poolesville, Maryland. John Farnsworth and the cavalry of the Union 6th Corp also headed for Poolesville. The Twelfth staged a small charge against the 3rd Indiana but subsequently retreated. At Poolesville the Twelfth suffered its first defeat.

The defeat was repeated two days later when on September 9, the regiment faced the 8th Illinois Cavalry. Choking dust, which made visibility impossible, forced the Twelfth to retreat. In the retreat the regimental flag was lost and Captain O'Ferrall was wounded. General Munford's subsequent censure of the Twelfth added insult to injury.

On September 14th Stuart ordered Munford to hold Cramptons Gap in South Mountain as Lee prepared to capture Harpers Ferry. A copy of Lee's orders had fallen into McClellan's hands which allowed the Union general to anticipate every Confederate move. That afternoon, McClellan ordered the 6th Corp to take Cramptons Gap. Five hundred Confederate soldiers of the Laurel Brigade faced 12,000 Federal troops at the base of South Mountain,

on a road lined with stonewalls. The Twelfth held the Confederate extreme right. Munford's brigade held the gap for three hours before being forced to retreat. Their efforts gained time for Lee at Harpers Ferry.

The Twelfth returned briefly to Virginia through Harpers Ferry before returning to Maryland. At the battle of Antietam, the regiment held Lee's extreme right. From this position they witnessed little of the carnage of the bloodiest day of the war. A letter written on September 17, while saying nothing about the clash on Maryland soil, reflects the dampened spirit of the invading soldiers.

Shepardstown Wednesday Sept 17th 1862

Dear Sister

I received your letter of the 1st yesterday and I set you a good example by answering it promptly you complain of my not writing home often enough I acknowledge I do not but still I write as often as I can for the last three weeks we have been continually on the march night and day some times not seeing our wagons for four or five days then we had to live on the country people [As] I saw Asher and Mike yesterday they were both looking very well said they had not heard from home for some time. I don't think Maryland will go with the south I think more than two thirds of the people are union any how they were in the part I was in it is true as we passed along we would meet a Secesh family here and there but they were scarce I never want to go back again I would like to go through-in to Pennsylvania but I don't want to stop in Maryland five minutes longer than I can help. Has Capt Eskridge got to Staunton yet I wrote home by the boy that drove his wagon. tell Pa he owes me a letter as does sister Kate for that knife I sent her Give my love to ma, Pa Kate and sister Elen and write soon to your Brother

Tom

The Twelfth retreated along with the rest of Lee's army. After their return to the Valley, they recruited men to fill the rank-and-file. General William E. Jones replaced General Munford as commander of the Brigade. The fall of 1862 was spent on picket duty in the lower Shenandoah Valley and on an occasional skirmish to Charlestown or Harpers Ferry.

On November 29 Federal troops advanced on Berryville. The 9th New York Cavalry formed a line along the Winchester Pike where they briefly engaged the Twelfth in a battle. The Twelfth retreated to Winchester. The Federals chased them as far as Opequon Creek before returning to east of the Shenandoah River with seven prisoners.

Following Berryville the Twelfth moved from camp to camp: Winchester, Strasburg, Bartonsville, and back to Strasburg. From Bartonsville Tom penned a humorous letter describing his encounter with the Yankees in Berryville.

Camp near Bartonsville

Dec. 6th 1862

Dear Sister Addie

You complain of my not writing home often enough I have not been making excuses before this because I have had not to make but here lately I [have had] had any paper and to day I went to Capt Eskridge and he me this little bit. I would like to have been home when Mike was there but I would much sooner come home Xmas & from what you said in your letter I expect to be there then. Dr. William's got here last tuesday & said the Col would certainly be here on the next tuesday I hope he will how did you like him I like him very much he is a nice man Dr. Burton & Col Burks had a little fuss and the Dr sent in his resignation the Col accepted it & forwarded it this took the little fellow by surprise and he begged to withdraw it stating as his reason that he intended to get a transfer & then he applied for that and in a few day he withdrew that so we cant get rid of him which every man in Regiment wishes to do. Has Capt Balthis resigned or not tell me in your next letter. Where is Mike Company at now I herd that Earley division was in the Luray Valley I hope it is left there for then the boys will have a chance to get home Xmass. On the 29th of Nov we had a little fight with the Yanks they had got between us & Winchester before we knew any thing about it. Old Allen the driver had ridden one of the wagon horses out to get some clothes washed when the news come so I put my horse in the wagon and got on the one of the Col and started for Berrys ville with the Regiment Major Massie in command we only had about 100 men we cut off a squadron of the Yankees and could not get the men to charge them the major ordered a charge & about half of the men went the flag was in front in that crowd the rest of them stayed in the woods the major ordered me back to bring them up I went back and tried to get them to come but could not do it they were cowards and would not got they started towards town I went with them and when we got there I heard there was some Yanks on the other side I asked the men would they go with me they said they would so we started of at a gallop and just before I turned the corner I looked around and saw the men going up sreat like the old boy was after them I then determined to see how many Yank they were & report to the Major I went on around the corner and looked down the streat and there



was a whole Yankee Regiment I had my pistol in my hand raised it up and fired it wheeled my horse and started up the street 8 or 10 Yanks after me shooting and howling like brave men after one many with a flag, never run a horse faster in all of my life. And the next morning when I got to town I came in by my self with the old flag hanging on my shoulders as hungry as a bear (for I had not anything to eat for 24 hours) an old lady was at standing at the door as soon as she saw me she hollowed at the top of her voice Oh Sally come here here is that Color bearer @ then she pitched in to thus, come in sir come in I so glad to see you I was sure the Yanks had gotten come in & get your breakfast I told her certainly & went in & got a firstrate breakfast so much runing out of town with the Yankees after me. I hope to be with you Xmass is not it wont be because I dont want to com for I dont know hardly how much I would give to see you all good by give my love to Pa Ma kate & Nellie and Sisters Seal & Margie

Your Bro  
Thos M Garber

It is natural to wonder if Tom embellished his wartime experiences. However, given his youth and youth's tendency to feel invincible, it is conceivable that Tom did indeed place himself in harm's way. Captain O'Ferrall rememberd:

It did not take me long to determine of what metal he was made. In a fight he was in his element, and the hotter it was the better he liked it...of all the brave and intrepid boys whom it was my pleasure and privilege to observe during the four years of strife, I never saw one who was the superior of Tom Garber.<sup>17</sup>

In the previously mentioned letter to Tom's father, Asher Harman concurred with this opinion:

In the ardous & hotly contested fields we have operated on, He has always been at his Post. And at Brandy Manassas & Poolsville my heart beat with pride, when I saw the flag of my Regiment ever in front & wave proudly in the hottest of the fight by him.<sup>18</sup>

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Ordinances Adopted by the Convention, in *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia Passed in 1861, in the Eighty-eighth Year of the Commonwealth*, (Richmond, Virginia, 1861), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Portions of this broadside pertaining to specific regions have been omitted in the interest of brevity.

<sup>3</sup>John Opie, *A Rebel Cavalryman with Lee Stuart and Jackson*. (Chicago: W. B. Conkey Company, 1899), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup>This story was related to the author by Bernard Schwinabart, the grandson of John Schwinabart.

<sup>5</sup>*United States Census and Slave Schedule*, 1850 Augusta County, Virginia.

<sup>6</sup>Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1943), p. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Lee A. Wallace, *A Guide to Virginia Military Organizations: 1861-1865*, Revised 2nd Edition, (Lynchburg, Virginia: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1986), p. 82.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>9</sup>Wiley, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup>Garber Letters, mss, January 19, 1862, Augusta County Historical Society Archives. (ACHS)

<sup>11</sup>Charles O'Ferrall, *Forty Years of Active Service*, (New York and Washington: The Neale Publishing Company, 1904) p. 80.

<sup>12</sup>Garber Letters, mss, September 25, 1862, ACHS.

<sup>13</sup>Omitted words and awkward phrasing causes this letter to be confusing. Taken at face value, it appears that Asher Harman is going to become color-sergeant, an unlikely occurrence for an officer. Tom probably means that his cousin Asher is going to make him, Tom, color sergeant after he procures a flag. Tom will serve as an orderly until such time.

<sup>14</sup>Dennis E. Frye, *12th Virginia Cavalry*, The Virginia Regimental History Series, 1st edition, (Lynchburg, Virginia: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1988), p. 7.

<sup>15</sup>E. B. Long, *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac 1861-1865*, (New York, Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1971), p. 249-250.

<sup>16</sup>Wiley, p. 90.

<sup>17</sup>O'Ferrall, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup>Garber Letters, mss, September 24, 1862, ACHS.

## IN MEMORIAM

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